Portraits of Wisdom

Paintings of the Great 20th Century Dharma Patriarchs and Elder Upasakas of the Zen and Pure Land School

By Norwegian Artist Simon Andreas

Introduction

In May 2024, Buddhist and artist Simon Andreas, at the request of his Dharma friend Brian Chung, started painting a series of modern official portraits of the Great 20th Century Dharma Patriarchs and Elder Upasakas of the Zen and Pure Land School. It is his wish that a fresh appearance may breathe new life into their precious legacies.

In the Words of the Artist:

I live far north, towards the edge of the earth. Since I was a child, I knew in my heart I wanted to walk a spiritual and artistic path. I encountered Buddhism during my travels to the east in my twenties, and it's been a source of relief, joy and inspiration in my life ever since.

In my portrait art I try to capture the real spirit—be it the piercing wisdom, purity of heart, good nature or deep devotion — of those teachers who have brought us the greatest of gifts, the Buddha-dharma.

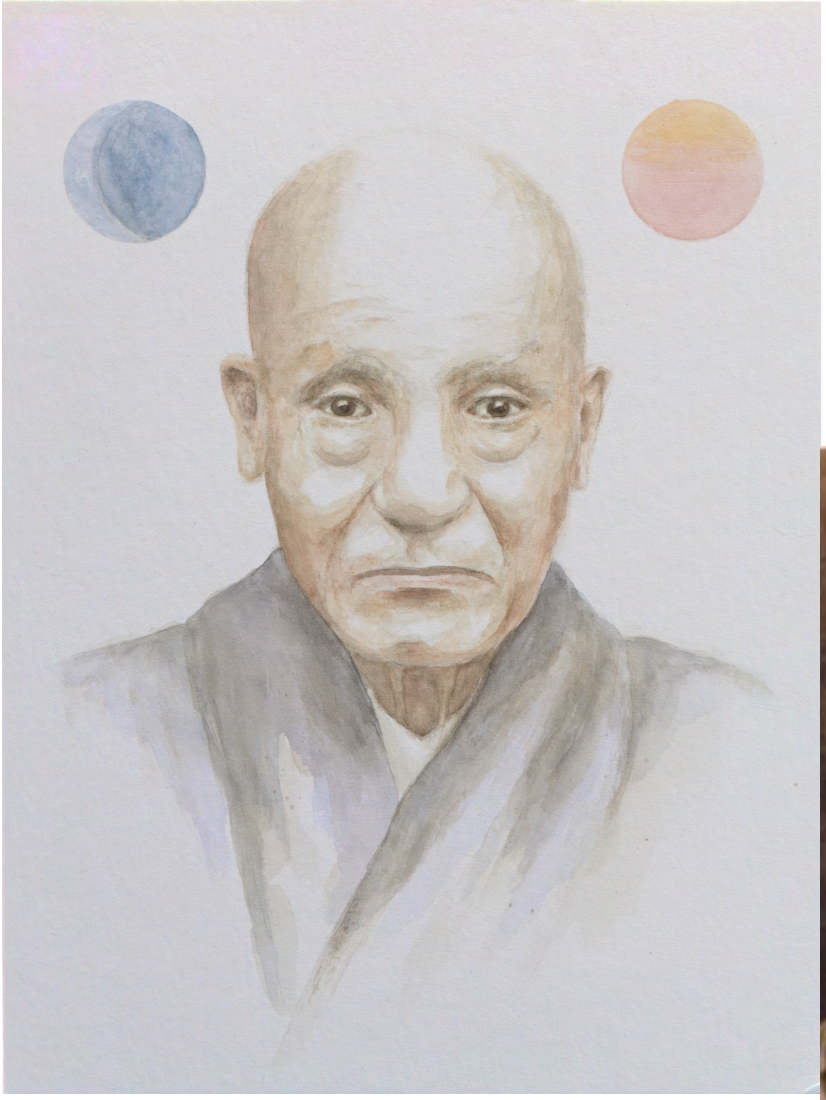
Take a moment to connect and reflect on their diverse and brilliant personas. Look with gratitude towards our teachers who are pointing the way to our true home and destiny alongside Amitabha.

Norwegian version:

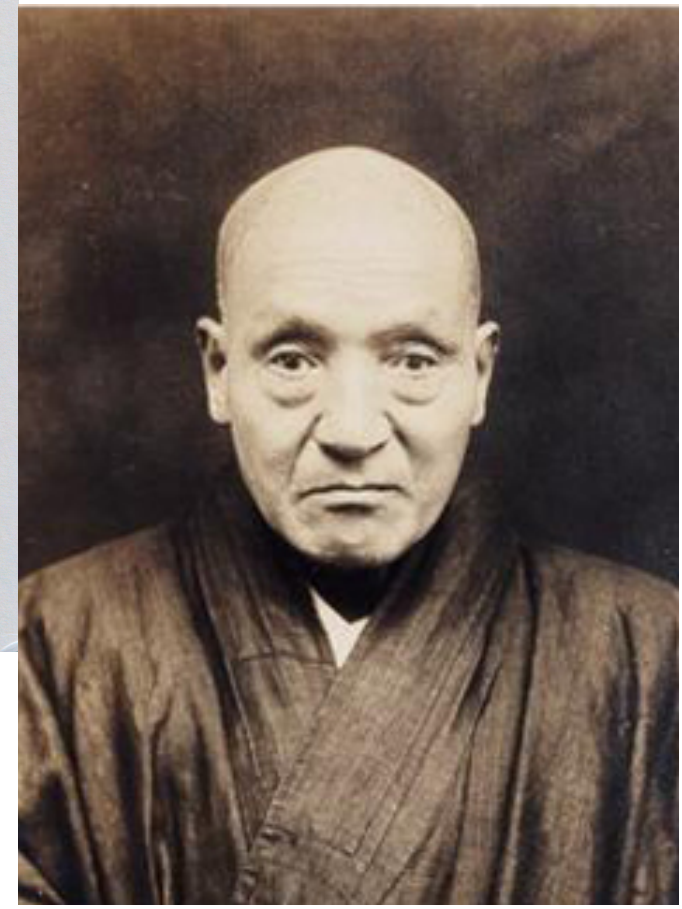
Jeg bor langt mot nord, ved jordas ende. Siden jeg var barn, hadde jeg et Ønske om å gå en åndelig og kunstnerisk vei. Jeg møtte på Buddhisme da jeg reiste til Østen i tyveårene mine. Denne troen har vært en kilde til inspirasjon, glede og helbredelse i livet mitt siden.

I min portrettkunst prøver jeg å få fram det ekte individet og dens indre kraft - om det så måtte være gjennomtrengende visdom, hjertets renhet, deres gode nature eller dyp hengivenhet - til de lærerne som brakte med seg den største gaven som er, nemlig Buddhas lære.

Ta et øyeblikk i fra dagen til å ta kontakt og reflektere på de mangfoldige og brilliante personlighetene. Vær takknemlig for våre lærere som viser vei til vårt ekte hjem og skjebne sammen med Amitabha.



Selected Letters of Master Yin Guang



Watercolour Portrait of Great Master Yin Guang (2024)

The Great Master Yin Guang (1862-1940), the 13th Patriarch of Pure Land Buddhism, was an important Dharma Master who was instrumental in saving Pure Land Buddhism during the chaotic years following the fall of the Qing Dynasty and subsequent Warlord era. His teachings form the bedrock of modern Pure Land Buddhism, and solve many of the common mundane problems afflicting people in their daily lives. After his Pure Land rebirth he was proven to be the manifestation of Great Strength Bodhisattva (Mahasthamaprapta). His is now remembered for his extensive collection of letters and forewords

In this portrait, the artist paid special attention to capture the Master's expressions of mercy and pity for beings mired in war and wickedness. He also adds an important touch, the Sun and Moon on the sides of Master Yin Guang. This symbolic addition represents the Master's wisdom and compassion, his exhortations for all beings to forsake evil and embrace virtue, exchange ignorance for wisdom, and transcend the mundane to achieve enlightenment.

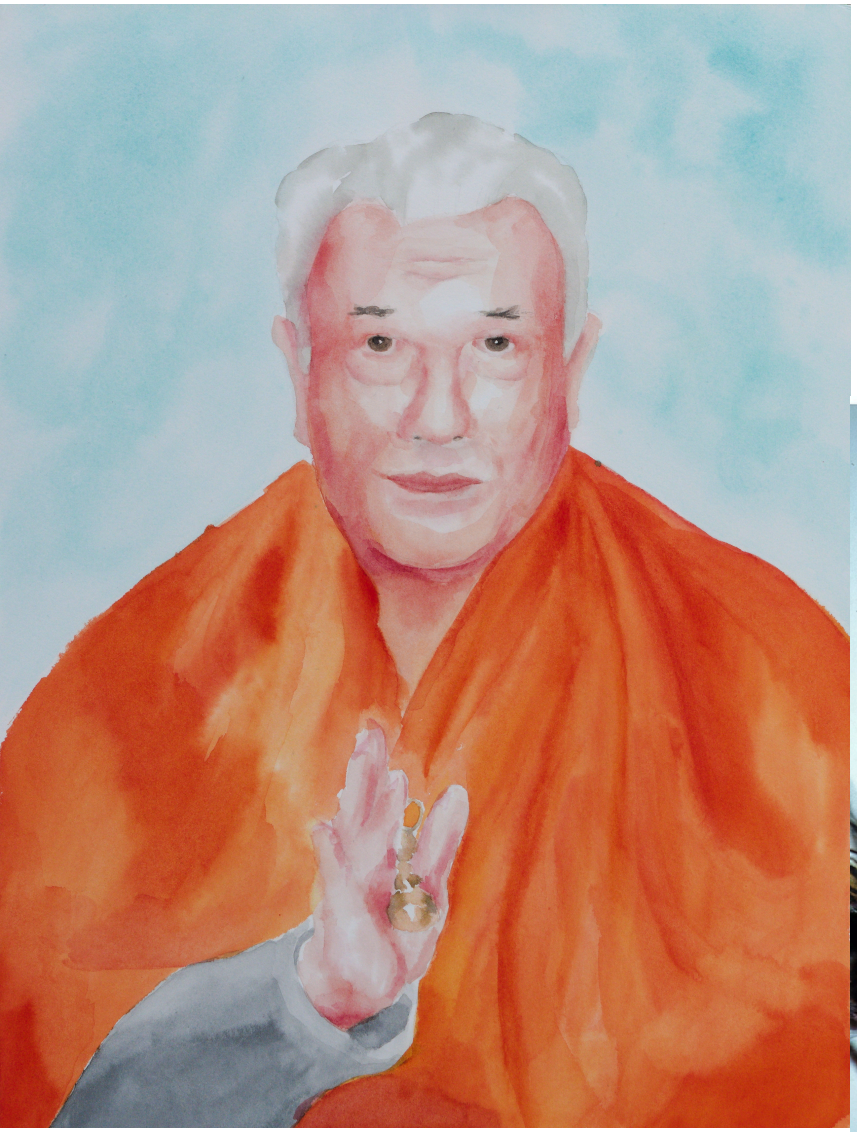
Master Hai Xian English Biography

Watercolour Portrait of the Venerable Master Hai Xian (2024)

Venerable Master Hai Xian (1901-2013) was a rare epitome of humility, faith and diligence throughout his entire long life (112 years) of cultivation. His lifetime cultivation of mindfulness of Amitabha has been praised by Master Chin Kung as the personification of the Infinite Life Sutra. Moreover, Master Chin Kung has even nominated Master Hai Xian to be the 14th Patriarch of Pure Land Buddhism.

The artist has masterfully adapted the photo of Master Hai Xian into a mellow painting—the first ever portrait painting of the Master—whose colours exude his wisdom, warmth and humble grace.

Furthermore, the Master Chin Kung has also encouraged everyone to have Master Hai Xian's portrait on display— to serve as a model and inspiration for their own practice.



Selected Works of Upasaka Huang Nien Tsu

Watercolour Portrait of Elder Upasaka Huang Nien Tsu (2024)

Elder Upasaka Huang Nien Tsu (1913-1992) was one of Ven. Master Chin Kung' s benefactors and teachers, and a major figure in Vajrayana and Pure Land Buddhism. He has studied under the Great Zen Master Hsu Yun and the Eminent Upasaka Xia Lian Ju. His famous commentaries on the Infinite Life Sutra by Upasaka Xia Lian Ju, and the Path to Pure Land Prayer book (also by Upasaka Xia) are now essential texts for the Pure Land School.

The artist sharply enhanced the original photograph before using it as the model for the painting. Accurately capturing the generous and compassionate poise of the Elder Upasaka.

Walker Translation of Upasaka Xia Lian Ju’s Infinite Life Sutra

Watercolour Portrait of Ven. Master Chin Kung (2024)

Following the legacy of Master Yin Guang, Ven. Master Chin Kung (1927-2022) spent six decades tirelessly expounding the Mahayana and Pure Land Sutras. Moreover, his greatest achievements are his Academy of Sinology in Wales, UNESCO Office, ceaseless efforts to promote interfaith harmony, and his decade long continuous lectures of Upasaka Xia Lian Ju’s Infinite Life Sutra. A Sutra that he has said is the most important for the rest of the Dharma-ending age.

The artist elegantly captures the Masters famous humility, dignity and piety. As well as the warm glow of wisdom he radiated throughout his life.

Famous "Song of the Skin Bag" Poem by Master Hsu Yun

Watercolour Portrait of Zen Master Hsu Yun (2024)

For this portrait of the renowned 120 year old Zen Master Hsu Yun (1840-1959), the artist first painstakingly enhanced the old photo of the Master before using an amiable and light selection of colours to express the Master's serenity. Moreover, the artist has mentioned that when he finished this painting, he felt the presence of a multitude of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas rejoicing with him.

Artist Instagram

Leaflet by Brian Bye Sheng Chung